SPORTS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE meeting of May 3, 2000

A regular meeting of the Sports and Recreation Committee was held at the H. Lee Dennison Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, New York on Wednesday, May 3, 2000 at 2:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Joseph Caracappa, Chairman Legislator Ginny Fields, Vice Chair Legislator Cameron Alden Legislator Vivian Fisher

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Clare Roden, Director, Suffolk County Youth Bureau Fred Verbarg, Suffolk County Youth Bureau Todd Johnson, County Executive's Office Elizabeth Nostrand, Legislative Aide to Legislator Fisher

Minutes Taken By:

Kimberly Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

(The meeting was called to order at 2:30 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Good afternoon. There is one resolution on the agenda and we will get right to you. I know there is a speaker, Clare Roden, who heads up our Youth Bureau.

I.R. 1406-2000 BANNING HIV SEMINAR FOR LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS.

While Ms. Roden is coming to the table, I will give a brief description of why I put this resolution in, and if you look at it, it is banning HIV seminar for legislative district recreational programs.

Historically the Legislature in the past has provided funding, and the County through the County Executive's Office, has provided funding for youth agencies. When I say youth agencies, I mean groups that provide a whole host of services for young people in any given community, but more so in regards to tutoring or some sort of social programs or where social workers are involved in giving out that sort of program or whatever it may be, maybe even some one on one consultation. Most youth groups do that sort of thing.

Today, though, we have moved into a new area over the last I'd say five years, four or five years, where we are providing funding for recreational groups. When we say youth groups, a lot of them are recreational programs such as soccer leagues, football leagues and little leagues. What recently had happened to a group in my district is they went to the HIV/AIDS preventive training update which is required in the contract for anyone that is receiving money from the

County, that they have to go through this sort of training.

The coaches and the soccer moms and the little league moms they went, and thinking it was a first aid program and being moms and dads they tagged the kids along too, and what happened was they were greeted by a very graphic display on AIDS education and awareness and prevention. It was shocking to them, needless to say, shocking to the kids. Now, I understand kids should not have been at this forum, at this seminar, but unfortunately, when you are, again, dealing with recreational programs and coaches who are moms and dads, sometimes kids are in tow.

I personally felt that when we are talking about a little league, when we are talking about a soccer group or any other sports or recreational type of group that we are helping out through the budget, I felt it was not necessary for them to go through this HIV type of seminar. Needless to say they were failed when they went to that seminar because I guess they were too appalled at what they were seeing and that drove me completely over the edge, where they actually went and did this where most people probably don't even bother going to this sort of training. They went and they were failed, so that was the last straw in my book where I said I don't think recreational groups need to go for HIV training.

Now, in the future maybe we can look at some sort of first aid class that they should be required to go to if they are a recreational league or some sort of group such as that, but that's why I filed this, that is why we are here today, but I will let Clare speak on it.

MS. RODEN:

Thank you for inviting me to come. I, Legislator, can truly understand your sensitivity and upsetness about this incident, because I almost fell on the floor. I have been the Director of the Youth Bureau since 1993. This part about the HIV training, and I have given you each information in front of you, the contractor agrees to participate in the Human Services Division technical assistance and training program. Such agreed participation will include staff training on the topic of HIV/AIDS.

Now, that has been in our contract for almost ten years. We have had youth agencies who participate only in sports for 20 years, although I have to tell you, the past four or five years we have doubled the extent of youth only bats and balls, as I call them, but we have always had sports as a preventative measure, which has been very important.

The HIV/AIDS training, as you will notice, aside from the fact that they signed on it for the contract, they were sent a memo February 2nd since I have a new staff member, and we were making sure our records were straight. She just reiterated your contract with the County requires all staff, underlined, who provide direct services to you to participate in this training once every two years. Now, this training is given by, the particular training you are talking about now is the Health Department. We have an HIV/AIDS committee because we are under contract with New York State to receive almost four million dollars, and we have to work under a comprehensive plan.

The HIV/AIDS committee is part of that comprehensive plan, and this is what that is a result of. This has come down. It wasn't my idea to have this, although at the time this was generated Suffolk County had one of the highest numbers of HIV/AIDS in New York State. We are still not out of the problem with HIV and AIDS. The numbers nationally have come down, probably because of education. I am very concerned about completely ignoring this part of the contract, however, as I mentioned to you, Joe, if you want this pulled, we will certainly do that for the youth agencies that only do sports. I do have a problem with one agency out of 100, and believe me, 100 agencies are under contract with the Suffolk County Youth Bureau, aside from the 350 we get of the budget item members. Every one of them is in compliance or I don't sign their vouchers. They have to be in compliance with every word that we have in our contract, because I am protecting taxpayers money and the laws that you people and the County Executive have set forth. From the first time I came in there, they knew that they have to go by this contract. This is necessary to run the department the way we are supposed to,

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whether it is budget modifications, Vivian, as we spoke about before. Everything has to be done according to the letter of our contract or we are not doing our job in the Youth Bureau.

The reason I was concerned, and one of the things that you mentioned before was that the moms and dads are not staff, all of them, were they taking their children. At no point did this say first aid training for kids. It does say HIV/AIDS for people who are staff members who are in contact with the kids.

My one thought with the bats and balls as I call them. I have had three children going through all areas of sports activities, and you know this, you are teacher. Walking off a field is sometimes a time a kid will say you know, I heard so and so. What do you think about whatever. They are not going to sit down and really talk to you. You are a mother also, right? They are not going to sit around the kitchen table and talk. It comes out of nowhere. So, my concern was just having an awareness of what these coaches, staff people who deal with the kids, know where to turn if someone says so and so had a problem, where should I go.

(Legislator Alden entered the meeting at 2:40 p.m.)

I also have a copy of what the original HIV/AIDS training for youth services, the whole list of things to do, and as I told you before, I am going to sit down with Clare Bradley anyway. We have not had a problem in all these years with this training, but I want to see what each one of the training groups are doing to make sure the curriculum is the same. I don't know if it is important to have some of the things that I heard that they did at the health training for the staff. Usually they are mothers and fathers, most of them are. There could be some young people who are executive directors. I think they have an idea on how to use personal safety protection. I don't know if it is even necessary to show it to them. Nor do I know if it is necessary to show an explicit video, maybe dialogue would be just as well. So, could you please give me some more feedback?

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

First, before I go to Legislator Fisher, I think you should keep the AIDS training for youth agencies that provide, again, some sort of counseling or there is a social worker. I think that is necessary. Again, I feel very strongly and I am opposed to this going on for recreational groups such as little leagues and balls and bats as you call them. I really don't think it is needed. I think it is not appropriate, especially after the seminar that this group went to where they were showing graphic videos, handing out condoms and showing these soccer coaches and these baseball coaches and moms and dads how to use a condom all in an effort to get a couple of thousand dollars to provide some sort of a subsidy for a little league. I think it is outrageous, but that does not mean I want you to eliminate it. By no means am I saying that you are at fault for this happening. I know you are just following the letter of the law that this body over the years had mandated you to do, and you have done a great job, but sometimes things aren't perfect. When you add new elements to your division or any other division within County government, sometimes there needs to be change. I firmly believe this needs to be changed.

With relation to kids coming off a baseball field, and you are absolutely right, this happens to me all the time. Kids ask me the questions in the weirdest places at the weirdest times. But you have to keep in mind they have, and Legislator Fields turned to me and made this point and it is very clear and a good one that they have this education in school as well. They have teachers in school as well, and they have this sort of curriculum and education to turn to and to ask there as well. I think it should be eliminated from this recreational group title when we are dealing with just a few thousands dollars in most cases to subsidize a little league. Legislator Fisher.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Clare, I agree with you that you do need some kind of HIV training and education. As an educator, I have been concerned that part of the population that we are not reaching in Suffolk County are the parents. The parents, I don't think, are aware enough about AIDS education. I absolutely cannot support this resolution. Perhaps we should modify the program, look at the program very carefully, and not make it as graphic as it was to the point of being so offensive to these parents. But we can't beg the issue of parents educating and answering their kids questions because the kids are being educated in school. Parents need to know, and parents are also vulnerable to AIDS. It is not just kids who get AIDS. Parents get AIDS. Parents are vulnerable to HIV infection. I think education is always a good thing, but I don't believe that it has to be at the extreme – I don't know what the curriculum was that was followed by the trainers in this session.

MS. RODEN:

I had not heard that the curriculum was the way it was explained to you. In fact, I was surprised at the graphic part of it.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

I also believe that people should be told it is HIV training. Probably adults don't have to be given condoms and shown how to use them, so that is probably something that can be eliminated from it. However, when a person is a coach, and I know all teachers have to have training on how to deal with pathogens, okay, how to deal with infection, also. If you are a coach and someone is bleeding, you have to be aware of how you can protect yourself also from being exposed. I think you have to be educated in HIV and how it works, when there isn't a concern, when there is a concern. Suffolk County does still have one of the greatest rates of HIV infection of anywhere in the United States – in New York State certainly.

I cannot see myself at all being able to support a resolution, but I would like to have you do a very close perusal and review of the curriculum that was used that offended -- and people failing it is a little bit strange to me.

MS. RODEN:

Well, again, because it is a three hour ordeal, if we put it that way, for that day, and they left after an hour and a half because they were offended, because they did not read my directive asking only to send staff, and then of course it went on ad nauseam for them.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Okay, but we shouldn't throw out the baby with the bath water.

MS. RODEN:

Well, there is another thing, and this is Fred Verbarg, who really has been with the Youth Bureau for –

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Wait a minute. If people come screaming to me about this, I would say to them that if it saves one life and one person from being infected by HIV, then I would support it. We need education, the AIDS education nationwide is something that we have earmarked as a very important priority. If people are offended by it - I'm sure these people have seen condoms before and they just have to be warned not to bring their children with them.

MS. RODEN:

Well, the directive in the contract is staff. As I said, there have been youth agencies in the Youth Bureau for 25 years and no one has ever brought anyone who was not a staff member. My direction in this memo that I signed off for my staff member was staff also. But there was a consideration, and we were discussing this up in the office before. Perhaps for the sports activities we could give them a brochure. I mean, maybe that would be something we could do just for awareness.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Well, why not just have someone speak to them on less graphic terms, just streamlining the presentation. Because you could give them a brochure and they are not going to read it.

MS. RODEN:

I am just trying to think of ways to come into a compromise here.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Well, I am saying streamlining the presentation.

MS. RODEN:

Well, that will be done. Someone from the Health Department called in because they didn't understand this resolution and I said it belonged to me and I said tell the Commissioner I am going to be meeting with her because I want to update, clarify, and clean-up this curriculum that Planned Parenthood, the Health Department, LIAC, that they are all presenting for us. They do this free of charge, I mean these other agencies, for the Youth Bureau.

If you would like maybe to discuss among yourselves or whatever, of course it won't be dropped from all of our counseling agencies of the others, but our other agencies also are pseudo counseling agencies, the ones say, Sachem. The kids play sports there but there is always a youth worker there who is trained. Wyandanch, which has a football team, also has after school programs. They are also trained. But it is the full intent of the Youth Bureau that if there is a child playing ball, a child anyone from eight to 21, playing ball or doing something else in a youth agency and all of a sudden starts to confide to a youth worker that there is abuse in the home or someone is pregnant, those youth workers know where to go, what to do, where to send the kid, how to counsel them immediately. We are just trying to make their lives a lot easier by handling everything.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Well, do we handle everything? Do we give a course on child abuse? Do we give a course on child neglect? Do we give a course on drugs and alcohol as part of this contract as well? You know, if you want to go one way with just the AIDS/HIV training, which I said was graphic and everything, it is being disputed, but why not do it all? I think that is more of a problem nowadays than HIV in little leagues and soccer leagues and little league football that there is abuse in the home as opposed to HIV. Where do you start and where do you finish?

MS. RODEN:

Well, as I said to you, I have already told the person who types this up for me that we will be talking to the Department of Law to eliminate that from the sports activities if you chose to pass this resolution.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

I personally feel that, again, and this is nobody's fault, but there comes a time when you have to look at things and see if they are suitable. And Legislator Fisher, I understand you are adamant about this, but I think you are thinking down the wrong track. Not that it is wrong, but you are talking about kids who play t-ball. You are talking about eight, nine year olds who play little league. You are talking about kids who can barely fit into football equipment. I don't think you are going to get an eight year old, ten year old, coming home talking about AIDS, and if they do, I am sure they can deal with it in their schools. The parents and the coaches and the soccer moms should not have to go through this three hour course on AIDS just to get a few thousand dollars to buy football equipment or baseball bats. I think it is wrong, I think it should be changed, I think it should be eliminated from recreational programs but continued in other programs where there is counseling. In this regard, I think it is overkill and not necessary.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Well, perhaps three hours is overkill. I am saying perhaps maybe we can streamline the program because I don't think we should beg this issue of children being able to go to parents and coaches and ask them questions. I don't think we should say they are educated in school. I think their community, I think part of the community should have the education. The AIDS situation is a very – it is an epidemic situation and in Suffolk County we are at very high numbers. How early does teen pregnancy begin, Clare?

MS. RODEN:

Ten.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Okay. Ten years old they are sexually active. So it is not too young. Ten years old, that is frightening. And a ten year old contracting AIDS is a lot more appalling and frightening to me than an adult saying that they are embarrassed by a condom.

LEGISLATOR FIELDS:

Do we actually have ten year olds who have contracted AIDS, though? Ten year olds, not newborns. Do we actually have ten year olds who have contracted AIDS? Do we have any case –

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

I'm sure.

LEGISLATOR FIELDS:

You can't be. You can't be sure of that. I agree with Legislator Caracappa about the appropriate time and place for everything. You know, there are appropriate times and appropriate places and degrees that we need to know things and at

times when we don't need to know them. I am not quite sure of how you are going to resolve this, but I think it was inappropriate judging from – I mean, you have not seen the course?

MS. RODEN:

No.

LEGISLATOR FIELDS:

Would it not be perhaps better to table this until you see the course and maybe for Legislator Caracappa or even perhaps this whole committee to see that course and make – I mean, I don't know how we can make an educated decision when we don't know statistics of ten year olds contracting AIDS, we don't know the curriculum of this course. None of us can make an educated decision, and I think that is what committees are all about.

MS. RODEN:

I have the outline, that's all. I have an outline of what it is, scope of the problem, epidemiology, statistics, transmission update, risk reduction.

LEGISLATOR FIELDS:

Can we see the outline?

MS. RODEN:

Of course. I have copies for you.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

I will tell you what was told to me firsthand from a whole host of phone calls that I received from the league that attended. It was the handing out of condoms, it was the showing of how to apply a condom. It was videos showing homosexual activity, how to be safe during homosexual activity, and a whole host of other graphic details that probably don't show up on this outline. And again, to have a group make the effort and go down there in masses and be turned away for their certification, it is just appalling.

Again, I stand firm. It is not necessary in recreational programs. If you want to go and see the program I would be more than happy to, and I will coordinate every little league in Suffolk County if I have to from the north shore to the south shore, bring the directors, and I will stand side by side with them and ask them how do you feel that you have to go through this junk and sit here and watch this for a couple of thousand dollars for equipment. At that point in time we will have a real feeling of what the leagues feel is appropriate and not appropriate and if it is even worth it for them to come to their representative and ask them for their help anymore.

I make a motion to approve.

LEGISLATOR FIELDS:

I was going to make a motion to table it, requesting that we all at least see this program and then make a determination.
CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:
Motion to table takes precedence. Is there a second?
LEGISLATOR FISHER:
Second.
CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:
Second by Legislator –
LEGISLATOR ALDEN:
On the motion.
CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:
On the motion, Legislator Alden.
LEGISLATOR ALDEN:
Would you be able to provide us – there is a number of things that I would need. Do you have a list of the contract agencies or volunteer agencies that give this program? I would need a list of that. I would like to know who developed arguidelines to prepare this program.
MS. RODEN:
HIV/AIDS committee that is under the contract with the Youth Bureau. By State law we have a comprehensive plan. We have an HIV/AIDS committee. I have a list of those members.
LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

MS. RODEN:

Well, it originated here in Suffolk County and approved of by the State. But what we – what this body does will take precedence. If this body wants to adjust, eliminate –

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

And that comes down from the Commissioner?

And then the other part is you are willing to look at all aspects of this to see if it can be –

Did this particular training, yes, it was the Suffolk County Health Department that did this training.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

No.

MR. VERBARG:

No, it is just one of the committees, and that is how it developed.

MS. RODEN:

Apparently it grew. Before I got here it was there. I believe it was because of the concern at that time when the HIV/AIDS was considered one of the top priorities of everybody.

MR. VERBARG:

It was initially put in just to make everyone aware of the AIDS problem. The whole idea of this was so that the staff would have some understanding of the problem and then would know who to refer if there was a child who came and asked about it and had a problem with it. That is how this all developed in the first place.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

There are certain things that I see in the outline that probably didn't require the kind of graphic description that has been described here. That kind of sensitivity – there are some issues that certainly could be brought forward, which, as I said before, would be a matter of streamlining the curriculum rather than eliminating it completely.

MR. VERBARG:

That is something we can certainly do with the Health Department. I mean, there is no need for the youth workers to be able to give complete training on AIDS to any of the children. I mean, that is really the Health Department's job. I mean, this was really put in just so that we could refer them to various people like the Health Department.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Right. So probably what these trainers did is inappropriate in the scope but not in the basic intent. They just went too far with this. So we need to see the curriculum, see how far they have gone and work on streamlining that.

MS. RODEN:

As I mentioned before, I have told – requested that I get to meet with the Health Commissioner anyway, and I want to go over this with her because there may be other things that are in there that really aren't necessary for someone –

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Right.

MS. RODEN:

We really want them to have the knowledge of where to refer to if there is a problem, where should the kids go -- maybe they should have a pamphlet. From what Joe said, there was some graphic things that were going on there that I don't really think are necessary for most adults – I'm sure they know already.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Right. We agree with that, but I haven't seen it, so I don't want to make a judgement call. But from the description that Joe has given us, that certainly went above and beyond what was necessary. But I don't think that, as I said before, we should throw out the baby with the bath water. I don't think you should throw out the whole concept because one lesson was done in a way that was offensive to people.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Just before you go. I am not asking to throw out the whole concept. I am asking you to eliminate recreational groups from it – little leagues, soccer leagues, football leagues, bats and balls leagues because it is not necessary.

LEGISLATOR FIELDS:

I think that with everything that we do in life we have to revisit it occasionally and figure out if what we are doing is accurate, if what we are doing is correct, and I think, you know, as I had suggested we should table this until we really do know what we are looking at, what we are not looking at, and making any kind of a decision of whether to keep it partially, to throw it out, etceteras. So I, again, state my motion to table until we have an opportunity to visit this.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

On that motion. As the Chair of this committee I would ask you, Clare, or someone from your department to please fax me or send me a list of every recreational group that is in this year's budget, whether it be member items or placed in the budget as a line, and get that to my office hopefully possibly also with a contact. I'd appreciate that. This way I can start contacting these leagues.

MS. RODEN:

Now, you think you want them to come and – I would like to know the steps you would like me to take. There is at least 15 of them in our regular budget, because I was looking at them before. The contingency ones always add a few more. But the contingency ones aren't required to do – there is another thing, there is that flip side. Now, Legislator Alden asked me to get him some background information, and –

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

Not me, through the Chair. I apologize for that. Everything has to go really through the Chair.

MS. RODEN:

Okay. I'll send that all to you.

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

And copies to the committee.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA

LEGISLATOR FISHER:

Arbitrary.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:
Just let me stop you a second. Contingency – member item stuff doesn't have to go through this training, but if you are placed in the budget you do. Explain.
MS. RODEN:
It is the contract.
MR. VERBARG:
The County Attorney has different contracts for those contracts – for those agencies.
LEGISLATOR FISHER:
You need the mike.
MS. RODEN:
The County Attorney has developed different contracts for your contingent – what we call contingency member items then in our regular contracts.
CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:
So it is okay for the Legislators sitting up here saying it is horrible that they even think this and that you need this, but it is okay if you give a soccer group contingency money that they don't go through this training.
MS. RODEN:
Well, it is basically if you decide to give a contingency \$10,000 to x, y, z soccer group and then the agency we were speaking about or someone else like \$20,000, that they are the ones who are complaining because it is in the regular contract that they are sustaining their money all along, and yes, it does seem –
CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:
Hypocritical.
MS. RODEN:
Well, not hypocritical –

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MS. RODEN:

It seems uneven in applying the law.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Again, it is okay when you give member item money and there is no problem, you know, no one is screaming about AIDS education there. But if you are in for less money in the budget it is a priority and you must do this because it may save one life. It drives me crazy.

I would ask for those – every league, every recreational group in this year's budget, contingency members as well –

MS. RODEN:

We'll break it out for you.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

And a contact person. I'd appreciate that.

MS. RODEN:

Okay. And then you were discussing that you would want to view the existing training. I mean, do you still – I don't know if you would want to just have members of this committee come and view the training or you are going to drag all these people out to view the training?

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

That will be my decision, what I do with those people. And I will have people who attended that meeting, that training, here at the next meeting so they can tell you firsthand what they saw and what they felt and if it was necessary. And these are from the regular people who have to go to these seminars. Then you can ask them the questions.

MS. RODEN:

What I mean is would you like us to set up that you and this committee go to a training to see what it is. Legislator Fields was mentioning that.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

I will poll the committee in the upcoming days, probably by Tuesday, and I will let you know.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Legislator Alden.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

I would also ask through the Chair that whoever gave that – if we are going to have contract agencies here – not contract, but the recipients here, I would like the people that gave that course, if they could be available.

MS. RODEN:

The Health Department.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

That course was given out at the South Brookhaven Health Department located in Patchogue.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

And if they could bring their course outline and any materials – in case we have a question on what actually happened and things like that. I'd appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

That is why I am brining the other people here, too, who went through that course, in case all of a sudden they realize hey, maybe we were too graphic and we won't bring all the stuff that we showed. That is why we will have both sides here.

There is a motion to table, there is a second. All in favor? Opposed? I am opposed. Abstentions? The motion is tabled. (Vote: 3/1/0/0 Opposed: Legislator Caracappa).

Is there anyone else who would like to address this committee on any other matter? We stand adjourned.

(The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.)